

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2054

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 0235

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (VALDEZ, ABELARDO L.) PA

SUBJ: VISIT OF AA/LA, ABELARDO L. VALDEZ

REF: STATE 12339

1. THIS EMBASSY HAS ALREADY INVESTIGATED OPPORTUNITIES TO USE SECTION III (E) FUNDS FOR PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES WHICH PROMOTE OR ENCOURAGE HUMAN RIGHTS.

2. THE AMBASSADOR SPOKE DISCREETLY WITH THE INTER-FAITH CHURCH COMMITTEE (COMITE DE AYUDA DE EMERGENCIA) WHICH PROVIDES MATERIAL AND LEGAL ASSISTANCE TO POLITICAL PRISONERS AND THEIR FAMILIES, ABOUT THEIR FINANCIAL SITUATION. THEY INDICATED THEY HAVE AMPLE FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE THROUGH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND VARIOUS AFFILIATES OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES. THEY ALSO VALUE THEIR INDEPENDENCE FROM ANY (RPT ANY) GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY AND WE BELIEVE THEY WOULD BE MOST UNCOMFORTABLE WITH ANY OFFER OF DIRECT USG ASSISTANCE.

3. THE PARAGUAYAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION IS ANOTHER MATTER. AS CURRENTLY CONSTITUTED THIS ORGANIZATION UNFORTUNATELY IS LITTLE MORE THAN A FRONT FOR THE NOW UNRECOGNIZED LIBERAL RADICAL PARTY (PLR). THAT IS NOT TO DENIGRATE ITS CONTRIBUTIONS TO MAINTAINING THE
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PRESSURE ON THE STROESSNER REGIME ON HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS, AND THE EMBASSY ENJOYS CORDIAL RELATIONS WITH THE COMMISSION'S ACTIVIST PRESIDENT, NATIONAL DEPUTY CARMEN DE LARA CASTRO, AND THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS. BUT THE COMMISSION'S MAIN INTEREST IS POLITICAL ACTIVISM AND IT SEEKS TO EXPLOIT HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES HERE MORE TO EMBARRASS THE REGIME THAN TO EFFECT REFORMS

PER SE. FURTHERMORE, THE PLR RECEIVES REGULAR COVERT SUPPORT FROM THE VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT. IT USES SOME FUNDS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVITIES AND OTHERS FOR PARTY ACTIVITIES. OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS WE HOPE TO ENCOURAGE THE COMMISSION TO BROADEN ITS MEMBERSHIP AND TO CHANGE ITS IMAGE FROM THAT OF A LIBERAL RADICAL PARTY GROUP. IF WE ARE SUCCESSFUL IN ACCOMPLISHING THIS, WE BELIEVE THERE MAY BE AN OPPORTUNITY TO USE SECTION II (E) FUNDS TO GOOD ADVANTAGE WITH THIS GROUP, BUT NOT RIGHT NOW.

4. THAT LEAVES THE PARAGUAYAN COUNCIL OF BISHOPS, HEADED BY FUTURE IV GRANTEE MONSEÑOR BENÍTEZ, AND THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST-BACKED MISIÓN DE AMISTAD, BOTH OF WHICH ORGANIZATIONS ARE ACTIVE IN HUMAN RIGHTS (AN PARTICIPATE JOINTLY IN THE CHURCH COMMITTEE). THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS SHOULD NOT RECEIVE DIRECT U.S. FUNDING IN OUR OPINION AND THEY PROBABLY DO NOT NEED IT. THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST FROM THE U.S. FUND THE MISIÓN DE AMISTAD.

5. ANOTHER RELATED FIELD IS INDIAN AFFAIRS. THE INTER-AMERICAN FOUNDATION ALREADY HAS A FAIRLY LARGE-SCALE PROJECT GOING IN PARAGUAY, KNOWN AS PROJECT MARANDU II, DESIGNED TO PROMOTE THE WELFARE OF PARAGUAY'S SEVERAL THOUSAND UNASSIMILATED INDIANS.
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IAF IS SPENDING \$1.3 MILLION ON THIS PROJECT. USAID HAS BEEN EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES FOR BECOMING INVOLVED IN INDIAN AFFAIRS, THROUGH SUPPORT TO THE MENNONITE COMMUNITIES IN THE CHACO. THIS KIND OF ACTIVITY WOULD SEEM TO FIT INTO THE SCOPE OF AID'S FUNDING OF HUMAN RIGHTS PROJECTS. THE PEACE CORPS IS ALSO ASSISTING IN SEVERAL INDIAN-RELATED PROJECTS, BOTH GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL (THE LATTER BEING PRINCIPALLY PROTESTANT AND CATHOLIC MISSIONARY ORGANIZATIONS).

6. WE WOULD BE GLAD TO ARRANGE FOR BRESLIN AND CULBERTSON TO MEET WITH OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN THESE SEVERAL INDIAN ACTIVITIES. AS YOU KNOW, PARAGUAY HAS BEEN ACCUSED REPEATEDLY OF "GENOCIDE" AGAINST ITS INDIAN POPULATION, AND ALTHOUGH CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE IN THIS FIELD, MUCH REMAINS TO BE DONE.

7. PLEASE LET US HAVE YOUR COMMENTS ON THE FOREGOING. WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO YOUR VISIT WHICH SHOULD BE MOST HELPFUL TO US.
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